

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

Amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) An isolated bacterial strain, characterized in that it is *Exiguobacterium* of the *lactigenes* [[genus]]strain and in that it has a DNA sequence, at least part of which is capable of hybridizing with genomic or plasmid DNA of the strain deposited on December 5, 2002, under the No. I-2962, with the Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes (C.N.C.M.) [French national collection of microorganism cultures],

said strain being thermoresistant, saccharolytic and amylolytic and/or capable of producing L(+) lactate, and

having growth properties at temperatures of the order of 40 to 50°C, at a pH of 5.4 to 9.15, with an optimum for growth at 45°C, at a pH of approximately 7, and

a guanine plus cytosine content in its DNA of approximately 50 mol%.

Claims 2-3. (Canceled)

Claims 4-7. (Canceled)

8. (Original) The bacterial strain deposited with the C.N.C.M. on December 5, 2002, under the number I-2962.

Claims 9-11. (Canceled)

12. (new) The bacterial strain as claimed in claim 1, characterized by the

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Amendment

sequence SEQ ID NO: 1 of the 16S rRNA.